

INTRODUCING AUTHENTIC RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

Jemma Berry^a, Aaron Beasley^b, Zoe Baines^c, Alex Kung^c, Hayley Tasker^c, Madison Trinder^c, Elin Gray^d

Presenting Author: Jemma Berry (j.berry@ecu.edu.au)

^aLecturer, School of Medical and Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Perth Western Australia 6027, Australia

^bMSc Candidate, School of Medical and Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Perth Western Australia 6027, Australia

^cUndergraduate Student, School of Medical and Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Perth Western Australia 6027, Australia

^dPostdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Medical and Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Perth Western Australia 6027, Australia

KEYWORDS: skills transfer, experience, research

One of the challenges facing new graduates is that they don't necessarily know what lies out there for them once they have finished their degrees. Not all students are aware of the jobs they are qualified for, or the post-graduate opportunities that may be available to them. In an attempt to engage with undergraduate students and give them a glimpse into life after graduation, we ran a pilot Cancer Research Summer Project (CRSP). In this pilot program we took four high-achieving second-year biomedical science students through a three-week research project, which exposed them to a real-life laboratory experience, and also provided them with additional skills training in areas such as scientific journal article writing and database mining. Students were given a fully immersive laboratory experience, receiving the type of instruction and supervision they could expect in either post-graduate study or out in the workforce, with some autonomy, and successes and failures driven by their own hands. Students reported that the CRSP provided a fantastic opportunity and made them aware of a new world of possibilities after graduation.

At the end of the project the students were provided with a supporting letter to include in their *curriculum vitae*, showing evidence of the industry-relevant training they undertook. Work experience is often required of new employees, especially in the field of biomedical research. This project had the additional benefit of providing students with vitally important first-hand experience. It also provided a vehicle to demonstrate to the students that the skills and theories they learn in their undergraduate courses can be directly transferred to the workplace or in their further studies.

With the continuation of this project into the future, the hope is that students can gain a broader understanding of the opportunities available to them and that more students will be encouraged to take up post-graduate study.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Queensland, Sept 28th to 30th, 2016, page 27, ISBN Number 978-0-9871834-5-3.